

BRIDGE ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE AT EL PASO

JULY 15, 1959.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. FULBRIGHT, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany H.R. 4538]

The Committee on Foreign Relations, to whom was referred the bill, H.R. 4538, authorizing El Paso County, Tex., to construct, maintain, and operate a bridge across the Rio Grande at or near the city of El Paso, Tex., report the bill favorably, and recommend that it do pass.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the bill is stated by its title. Construction and operation of the bridge would be in accordance with the General Bridge Act of 1906 and would be subject to the approval by the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, and by the proper authorities of Mexico. The bill conforms in all respects to other such legislation. This is an original bill and not an extension of authority previously granted.

COMMITTEE ACTION

On February 4, 1959, Senator Yarborough introduced S. 922, a companion bill to the House measure. Both the Departments of State and of the Army commented favorably on the bill, the State Department with three proposed changes, all of which are contained in the House bill. The letters referred to are as follows:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, March 20, 1959.

Hon. J. W. FULBRIGHT,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate.

DEAR SENATOR FULBRIGHT: The Department of State has received S. 922, concerning which the Department's comments were requested in Mr. Marcy's letter of February 7, 1959. This bill would authorize

El Paso County, Tex., to construct, maintain and operate a bridge across the Rio Grande at or near the city of El Paso.

While the Department has no objection to such authorization, the following changes on page 1 are suggested for the reasons stated:

(1) that the word "River" following "Rio Grande" in the title of the bill and in line 5 be deleted as redundant;

(2) that the words "the waters of" in line 6 between "over" and "such" be deleted as being unnecessarily restrictive and possibly misleading;

(3) that there be inserted after "Texas," and before "in accordance" in line 8, the words "but east of the tract of land belonging to the Republic of Mexico known as 'Cordova Island'.". There exists, between the United States and Mexico, a dispute as to the sovereignty over a portion of the land north of the Rio Grande and west of Cordova Island. Although, presumably, the authorities of Mexico would not give their approval (required by subsec. (3) of sec. 1 of the bill) to the construction by El Paso County of a bridge in this disputed area, it is considered advisable, from the standpoint of relations between the United States and Mexico, to limit the authorization to construction of a bridge between points in the United States and Mexico where sovereignty is not in dispute.

With the above changes, the Department would have no objection to the enactment of S. 922. Further, with such changes S. 922 would be identical with H.R. 4538 with respect to the enactment of which the Department is indicating that it has no objection.

The Department has been informed by the Bureau of the Budget that there is no objection to the submission of this report.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM B. MACOMBER, Jr.,
Assistant Secretary
(For the Acting Secretary of State).

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY,
Washington, D.C., April 29, 1959.

HON. J. W. FULBRIGHT,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Reference is made to your request for the views of the Department of the Army with respect to S. 922, 86th Congress, a bill authorizing El Paso County, Tex., to construct, maintain, and operate a bridge across the Rio Grande River at or near the city of El Paso, Tex.

This bill would authorize El Paso County, Tex., to construct, maintain and operate a bridge across the Rio Grande River at or near El Paso, Tex. The construction and operation of the bridge would be in accordance with the act of Congress approved March 23, 1906 (34 Stat. 84), pertaining to the construction of bridges over navigable waters, and would be subject to approval by the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, and by the proper authorities of Mexico.

The Department of the Army interposes no objection to the enactment of the above-mentioned bill.

The bill would not authorize the appropriation of Federal funds for construction of the bridge.

The Bureau of the Budget advises that there is no objection to the submission of this report.

Sincerely yours,

WILBER M. BRUCKER,
Secretary of the Army.

H.R. 4538 was introduced by Mr. Rutherford, February 16, 1959, reported to House, June 12, 1959, passed House, July 6, 1959.

The Committee on Foreign Relations, on July 14, 1959, having received a letter from Senator Johnson of Texas and a statement from Senator Yarborough, both in favor of H.R. 4538, reported the bill favorably to the Senate. No Federal expenditures are authorized by H.R. 4538. The Committee on Foreign Relations urges the Senate to take prompt and favorable action on the bill.

APPENDIX

(Statement by U.S. Senator Ralph Yarborough (Democrat, Texas) before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, July 14, 1959:)

Mr. Chairman, at one time, El Paso del Norte was just a way station on a traveling route. Since that time, it and its sister city across the Rio Grande, Juarez, have grown and expanded rapidly. There is every indication this growth will continue, and at a more advanced pace.

At this time, there are about 600,000 people in the El Paso-Juarez area.

I was a resident of El Paso for 3½ years and am personally familiar with the problems of the people there. I agree with a great many of the civic leaders and outstanding citizens who have advocated that another bridge be put across to the friendly Republic of Mexico, south of the Rio Grande.

Since the opening of the improved port facilities at the Santa Fe Street Bridge late in 1957, the volume of inbound vehicles has increased by almost 50 percent. There has also been a sharp increase in the traffic going into Mexico.

It is estimated that about 3 million vehicles would use the new bridge the first year and another million would be added to that the following year.

The proposed site of the bridge is close to the geographical and population centers of El Paso. It is close to the military installations in the area. The city of Juarez has been growing in the same direction.

This bridge is being planned by farsighted public officials and community leaders in both Texas and Mexico. It would not only break up the traffic jams which now plague the border crossings, but it could contribute also to the interchange of culture and ideas as well as jobs and services between friends on both sides of the border.

The bridge will promote a finer good neighbor policy not only in El Paso and Juarez, but throughout the area the States of Texas and Chihuahua, and both Republics.

The city of El Paso covers 103.25 square miles, one of the larger corporate areas in an American city. Plenty of room is left for growth and expansion in this, the 75th largest city in population according to the U.S. census in 1950 and 47th according to the Sales Management "Survey of Buying Power." It is the center of a trade territory covering several hundred miles. And the city's population is growing at three times the national average. Retail sales have almost doubled in the city in the past 8 years, food sales are more than double. The effective buying income is estimated at over a billion dollars.

El Paso is the largest border city and imports and exports exceed \$118 million a year. Plus the 25,820,413 crossings from Mexico in 1958 made it one of the busiest ports of entry in the Nation.

Annual payrolls at the nearby military installations are in excess of \$137 million and millions more are spent for maintenance, construction and expansion.

Economic enterprises in the area vary from cattle and cotton production to oil and gas and mining.

Construction of the new bridge would benefit the business communities of both El Paso and Juarez. In addition to the factors I have mentioned above, there is a large tourist trade which brings more economic growth and activity to the area.

Mr. Chairman, as I have said, I know from experience that another crossing of the Rio Grande at El Paso and Juarez is vital to the economic growth of the area and to the furtherance of the fine relations we enjoy with the Republic of Mexico.

I heartily endorse and support this proposal and urge the committee to act favorably upon it.

